



# F&M Statement on Freedom of Expression

## Preamble

---

This statement of principle articulates Franklin & Marshall College's ideals relating to freedom of expression, respect for the opinions of members of the College community, and freedom from harassment and intimidation. It expresses the College's commitment to these core values, was developed by the Faculty with input from the administration and was approved for inclusion in the *Faculty Handbook* by the Board of Trustees on February 11, 2017. It is a statement of principle and aspiration that may inform policy, but in and of itself does not constitute policy.

The *Faculty Handbook* also contains Franklin & Marshall's Statement of Academic Freedom and Tenure, as well as the Statement on Academic Freedom promulgated by the American Association of University Professors. Those provisions delineate the core rights and responsibilities of the Faculty and they are not compromised by the statement of principle below.

## Statement on Freedom of Expression

---

Because Franklin & Marshall College is committed to the ideal of free and open inquiry in all matters, it extends to all members of the College community the broadest possible latitude to express themselves freely and to challenge the views of others. The College vigorously values the creation and maintenance of a climate in which all members of the College community are welcomed and are encouraged to participate in the free expression of ideas. Inasmuch as the spark of truth

Indeed, fostering the capacity of the College community to engage in critical discourse and deliberation in an effective, responsible and respectful manner is an essential part of the College's educational mission. Of course, the ideas of different members of the College community will often and quite naturally conflict. But it is not the proper role of the College to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, uncivil or even deeply offensive. Rather, members of the College community should be encouraged to act according to the principle that the best response to ideas that they find offensive is speech, not censorship. This approach encourages members of the College community to express their views freely, and freely to take issue with views with which they disagree.

The freedom to debate and discuss the merits of competing ideas does not, of course, mean that individuals may say whatever they wish, wherever they wish. We have obligations to protect the dignity and security of all members of the College community from those who would seek to use speech primarily to deprive others of their freedom to learn, their freedom to contribute, and their freedom to participate in our community. Thus, the College may seek to restrict expression that violates state or federal law or College policies on nondiscrimination; that constitutes slander, threats, or harassment; or that is directly incompatible with the functioning of the College (e.g., expression that violates privacy or confidentiality interests). In addition, the College may reasonably regulate the time, place and manner of expression to ensure that it does not disrupt the ordinary activities of the College (see Section VII.H). But these are limited exceptions to the general principle of freedom of expression, and it is vitally important that these exceptions not be used in a manner that is inconsistent with the College's ideals relating to the free and open discussion of ideas.

In short, the College holds the core principle that debate or deliberation should not be suppressed because of the ideas put forth. We support a climate of inclusiveness in which all members are encouraged to contest vigorously the ideas and the speech that they oppose. Moreover, in order to foster the climate of inclusiveness that is most conducive to freedom of expression in the pursuit of knowledge, the College aspires to the following:

1. Sustaining a diverse community of students, Faculty, and professional staff in which all are welcomed and are encouraged to participate in the free expression of ideas.
2. Challenging behavior and speech whose demonstrable intent is to demean, harass, or limit the sense of security and belonging of any member of the College community as they participate in the pursuit of knowledge.

